

Please include my comments for the record in the FCC Hearing in Rapid City, 5/26/04.

My name is Bill Wippel. I have been involved in radio for the past 54 years. I worked for KXLE, Ellensburg, WA KOZE, Lewiston, ID, KOFE, Pullman, WA, KORD, Pasco, WA, and KUTI, Yakima, WA. They were all independently owned and ranged in power from 250 to 5,000 watts. I currently read the Seattle P-I for the blind once a week over the Seattle FM station for the Washington Talking Book and Braille Library. I also voice radio features for a group of small market stations in the cities of Moses Lake, Ephrata, Richland and Yakima all in Washington state.

Local radio is dying. Just listen to any station. Seldom heard is local news. Most stations have abandoned that. They broadcast psas for large non-profits with a national image: Salvation Army, March of Dimes, American Cancer Society and others that are "well-known".

Seldom does a radio station find a locally sponsored individual charity and promote its causes. It takes time and money for a station to become familiar with a local charity, especially one without a recognized name.

One of the main features of local radio in a small community was the "Swap and Shop" live programs. My station in Pullman, WA aired such a public service daily for an hour each morning. People could advertise their items for sale for free! Such programs have all but vanished.

Another fund-raiser we had at KOFE-AM (1959-1964) was Radio Day. Merchants in the town ran the radio station for a day, selling their own radio time. They did the news, weather and spots live. At the end of the day, all the proceeds were donated to the Pullman Chamber of Commerce to buy Christmas decorations for the city and help families in need.

Also we did remotes from county fairs in our coverage area, talking with farmers, townspeople and officials about the positives of living in the area. Some of the cities we broadcast from had never had a radio station broadcast from their town. Some had populations less than 1,000. Try and find that in conglomerate-owned radio today.

Our local newscasts were 30 minutes in length. They featured cattle and grain futures, plus interviews at length with local newsmakers. It took hours of our time attending city, county and regional meetings, lugging mikes and tape recorders to each event. Often I would sign the station on at 5am and not be through with work until midnight.

Now when I travel throughout my home state of Washington I have yet to find any of these features. Most local news is now read from the wire, newspaper or secondary regional network audio. Local radio has almost become extinct.

Thank you for including my comments.

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